



# Returning to Learning During a Pandemic

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## Abstract

When schools across the nation were shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, parents were faced with many challenges regarding their children's education. After months of being shut down, school districts were tasked with navigating the restrictions and guidelines put in place by the CDC and state and local health agencies in order to make a decision about how the 2020-2021 school year would look for their students. After school districts made decisions regarding a return-to-learning plan, some parents had to decide whether or not to send their children to school during a pandemic. This study was designed to investigate socio-economic factors that contributed to parents' decisions to send their children to school remotely or in-person for the 2020-2021 school year. Surveys were deployed to parents of children in grades Kindergarten through 8th asking for feedback about their experience with remote learning at the end of the 2019-2020 school year and about their decisions regarding their children's academic setting for the 2020-2021 school year. Data is currently being collected; this presentation will convey initial findings from the emergent data of this research in progress.

## Introduction

On March 15, 2020, Executive order 2020-05, enacted by Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, required all public and private schools in Illinois to close for the period of March 17-March 30, 2020 (Illinois State Board of Education, 2020). After an extended closure, on April 17, 2020, Governor Pritzker announced that schools would remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year (Issa, et al., 2020). With little direction from the state, teachers were required to teach virtually, while parents and students adjusted to remote learning. As the 2020-2021 school year approached, schools and parents alike were faced with the difficult decision of how to safely and effectively return to learning.

## Hypotheses

- People who were adversely affected financially by COVID-19 will enroll their child(ren) in remote learning more frequently than in-person learning.
- People from more affluent backgrounds will enroll their child(ren) in in-person learning more frequently than remote learning

## Methods

- This research surveyed parents of Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade children about:
- their experiences with remote learning in the Spring of 2020
  - their decision-making process for enrolling their child(ren) for the first semester of 2020-2021 school year
  - their decisions for enrolling their child(ren) for the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year

## Discussion

We were met with several speed bumps along the way to completing this research. At first, we planned on completing the research in one school district with a diverse population, but when an issue arrived within that district, we had to come up with Plan B., We settled on sharing the survey on social media, for our own personal friends to complete. Our sample population was much smaller and less diverse than we originally hoped for, but the results do suggest that parents wanted their children enrolled in in-person learning for the 2020-2021 school year. Moving forward, we will deploy the survey to a parent-specific social media group to solicit responses from a wider participant pool. In doing so, we hope to provide greater insight into the socioeconomic conditions that impacted schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## References

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## Results

- H1: People who were adversely affected financially from COVID-19 were more likely to enroll their child(ren) in in-person learning for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.



- H2: People from more affluent backgrounds were more likely to enroll their child(ren) in in-person learning for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

